

95
APR 23 1937

DRAMA

A MONTHLY RECORD OF THE THEATRE
IN TOWN AND COUNTRY
AT HOME & ABROAD



CONTENTS

APRIL, MCMXXXVII

PLAYS OF THE MONTH: BY
S. R. LITTLEWOOD / FESTIVAL
ADJUDICATION: BY W. A.
DARLINGTON / DOES THE
SCREEN NEED ACTING?
/ ILLUSTRATIONS /

6d.

Published by
THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE
9 FITZROY SQUARE
LONDON
W.1

Speech Choruses Trained

And Lessons given on

Poetry Speaking & Diction

To Societies Producing

Plays in Verse

COURSES OR SINGLE LECTURES

LORNA DAVIS, 41b, Belzize Park Gardens, N.W.3.

(Tel: PRIMArose 5243)

(Recommended by :- Mr. Laurence Binyon, Mr. Clifford Ban,
Mr. E. Martin Browne and others.)

Indispensable to all users of the Library

THE PLAYER'S LIBRARY II

Being the first supplement to the Catalogue
of Books in the Library of the British
Drama League.

Price 2/8 post free.

From: 9, FITZROY SQUARE, LONDON, W.1

MISS WEBBER'S TYPEWRITING OFFICE

PLAYS, PARTS, AUTHORS' MSS., ETC.
VISITING SECRETARIES
DUPLICATING

6, Suffolk Street, Pall Mall, London, S.W.1.

Telephone: Whitehall 8324.

TO LET

for

REHEARSALS, ENTERTAINMENTS, Etc.

SMALL THEATRE (S. Kensington),

Seats 120; Stage 19' x 9'. Full Stage Lighting
and Dimmer, Plain Curtains.

Terms:

Evenings £3-12-6.

Mornings or Afternoons by arrangement.

Extra Room if required; also Large Garden
available during Summer.

Apply:—Box 17, Advert. Dept., "Drama."

Valerie Prentis and Enid Barr

Present

LECTURE DEMONSTRATIONS

on

COSTUME

● CLOTHES AND THE PLAYER.

"From Cote-Hardie to Crinoline."—A lecture
demonstration of general interest on costume
and movement particularly suited to Drama
Schools and Dramatic Societies.

● FOUNDING A STAGE WARDROBE.

Some basic notes on stage costume in a simple
demonstration on practical methods of cut
and construction.

FOR SCHOOLS

● CLOTHES & HOW THEY WORE THEM.

Some pages from the history of Costume and
Manners, presented in such a way as to give
life and reality to an unusual subject, arranged
to appeal to both Junior and Senior forms.

Other Lectures & Special Coaching can be arranged.

Write for LECTURE SYLLABUS to

16 Charibert Street, St. John's Wood, N.W.8

DRAMA LEAGUE COSTUMES

Hire your Costumes for
this season from

The Costume Department

9, FITZROY SQUARE,
LONDON, W.1.

All Periods

All Styles

Expert Assistance

Quick Service

Telephone: EUSTON 2666

Please mention "Drama" when replying to Advertisements.



1
V
=
=
r
o
tr
h
L
d
n
e
a
b
n
v
h
E
h
d
s
M
E
a
L
L
J
a
c
v
L
E
s
L
E
C
a
n
f
s

DRAMA

VOL 15

APRIL, MCMXXXVII

NUMBER 7

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

PLAYS OF THE MONTH

By S. R. Littlewood

THIS has been, appropriately to the year and season, a month of young endeavour and old revival. On the whole, youth has triumphed. "George and Margaret" (Wyndham's), by Gerald Savory, son of Miss Grace Lane and the late Kenneth Douglas, remains deservedly the most successful first play. It represents—to me, at any rate—the healthy emergence of a young author, full of humour and of humanity and with the stage in his blood, free from the sub-acid Chekovian ironies recently thought essential. Though it deals with a thoroughly "modern," harum-scarum household, all its characters are lovable. Beneath apparent irrelevance is a delicate and happy weaving of gossamer. How much is due to Mr. Richard Bird's production only the managers who refused the script can know. Mr. Noel Howlett as the father, Mr. John Boxer as the elder brother, Mr. Ronald Ward as the pianist, Miss Jane Baxter as the daughter, Miss Ann Casson as the Irish maid, with Miss Irene Handl as her mute successor, and Miss Joyce Barbour as the harassed mother—all are discoveries of faith either in new players or in new facets of talent. Mr. Bird has achieved another success as actor in Mr. Jeffery Dell's "Night Alone" (Daly's); but here the play is just padded-out Plautine farce.

Another young play has been "Great Possessions" (Duke of York's), by the Hon. William Douglas-Home. It has owed something, perhaps, to the fact of its author being a son of the Earl of Home, to its choice of a vital and current theme in the Oxford Group Movement and to the controversy over its disowned finish. At the same time it is a sincere and appealing piece of work, and much cleverer

than anything that has been said about it either by the author or by others. I do not myself think that the conventional end to the young baronet's premature missionising matters much. Whether he lived or died did not affect the truth of the main challenge, or the excellent and new character-development—so well suggested by Mr. Hubert Gregg—in his friend the pawn-broker's son, born to be a bishop.

Yet another young play—"Bats in the Belfry" by Robert MacDermot, the B.B.C. announcer, and his wife, Diana Morgan (Ambassadors)—has achieved West-End honours, with Miss Lilian Braithwaite as the aunt who flutters a rectory. This has a promising beginning, but in the whole conduct of the affair I felt the authors had guessed my sympathies—and, possibly, those of other people—wrong. I liked the characters they derided and brought to disaster—the honest stock-broker and reminiscent Oxonian played by Mr. Michael Shepley and Mr. Eric Maturin. But in spite of Miss Braithwaite and Mr. Kendall I could not abide either the aunt or her favourite nephew.

Of other new plays I found "Retreat from Folly" by Amy Kennedy Gould (Queen's) little more than a Marie-Tempest virtuoso-piece, worth seeing just for her entries and exits, her cajoleries, her discussing of hotel-menus and pouring out tea from a dazzling pot, her rallying parades of common sense, her flashes of sentiment and all the other arts that our queen of comedy has at her fingers' ends. Apart from this the play seemed to me to have no particular purpose.

By way of contrast to Shaftesbury Avenue's glamour and sparkle, a thought might be

PLAYS OF THE MONTH

spared for "Out of Sight" (Gate) by Leslie and Sewell Stokes, authors of that admirable and ruthless biography, "Oscar Wilde." "Out of Sight"—an unsparingly grim study of prison-life—is likely to remain true to its name so far as the pleasure-hunting public are concerned. As a memorable and convincing indictment it can hardly be ignored.

Another courageous but, for me, not completely satisfying adventure has been "The Ascent of F.6," the tragi-comic revue, by W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, which Mr. Ashley Dukes has presented at the Mercury. I found myself entertained but not deeply impressed. The contrast afforded by the struggles of actual Himalayan climbers set against fatuous broadcasters and domestic listeners on the multiple stage had its undoubted dramatic value. But political implications

and diatribes against the social order left me cold. No-one, after all, essays the "conquest" of a peak save of his own free will.

The revivals of the month—outside Shakespeare—have not been stirring. "Heartbreak House" (Westminster) never was as good a play as "Candida" still proves. It is just Shaw "keeping it up." But one remained grateful for Mr. Cecil Truncer's magnificent Captain Shotover. Mr. R. E. Sherwood's "The Road to Rome" (Savoy) has also failed to induce me to revise my earlier opinion. An able young actor has undoubtedly arrived in Mr. James Mason as Hannibal; but as a historical study the play seems again trivial. We all know the sound strategical reasons that kept Hannibal from entering Rome. The wit I still find tediously limited to jokes about Fabius's virility and the fate of women in war.

DOES THE SCREEN NEED ACTING?

Various Views collected by Doré Silverman

THERE is still a lot of snobbery talked and written about the screen. It is "young" (as if that were an offence!) It is undeveloped. Just because it is only some thirty years old, as against the age of the drama, which is at least two thousand years, it is dubbed "an upstart science," "an affair of celluloid and scissors," "a pastime for the non-thinking," and so forth.

And of all that goes to the making of films, acting has called forth the most vehement criticism. "It doesn't need *acting*!" I have been told, frequently by stage-players who had never received an offer to enter a film-studio. It's all a matter of posing, of brief scenes which are later assembled and given a sequence. "On the stage" (this in a proud tone, as if the speaker had invented acting) "it is the actor who creates, the player who counts. On the films, the director is the only one who matters."

These people had a stronger case—if, even then, they had one—when films were dumb. One might have thought that, with the coming of the sound-film, fanaticism would give way to reason, but prejudice is a hard nut to crack.

For instance, we have the assertion of Theodore Komisarjevsky that "*You do not need to be a good actor for the screen.*"

Now M. Komisarjevsky deserves at least a hearing. His professional record demands that. He has been both stage and film director, is an ex-director of the Imperial and State Theatres of Moscow, producer for the New York Theatre Guild, was mainly responsible for starting a vogue for Tchekov in this country, and is acknowledged in Germany, Italy, France, and Great Britain for his theatre-craft. He has stage-directed Bergner, and other famous players.

He goes on to say: "The success of a film is in the application of the producer's scissors in cutting pieces of film and in pasting them together in an artistic manner. The success of a film lies in the ability of the producer to take only the best pieces of endless yards of photographed action. Of course all film-players appear to be fine actors. The audience, however, does not see their ordinary acting. Out of every fifteen minutes of their best acting, the film-producer takes about half-a-minute's film for display to the public.

"The art of the film is simply one of composition In a real film the man has the same value for the will of the artist as any other object used, such as light, sound, the tempo and rhythm of movement."

DOES THE SCREEN NEED ACTING?

It needed little reflection to see that the opinions of such a man were sure to be to the many film-cum-stage actors as a red rag to a bull, as a quota film to certain American film concerns. So I have sought expressions of opinion on his thesis. Some of the actors and actresses with whom I spoke retorted with a flat contradiction: others conceded that there was "something in it." But the majority enlarged on the theme and stated the view—although in different words—that stage acting was alien to the screen, for the latter demanded acting of a different *kind*. In other words, they agree with him, but for reasons different from those he had in mind.

CHARLES LAUGHTON :

"The technique of the screen is different from that of the stage. In acting on the stage one always has to be conscious of the audience—trying to project one's emotions and oneself across at the audience even if one is turned away from them and it means projecting out of one's left ear. In acting for the screen it seems to be one's business to live one's part and it is the camera's business to do the searching.

"Yet the screen does have the inestimable advantage in the matter of pantomime, which can be done much more effectively by means of the close-up One prime advantage the screen has over the stage is the stimulus over the imagination that comes with frequent change. Any screen role requires more patience, proportionally, than similar work on the stage."

A little later, however, emboldened by wider screen experience, Mr. Laughton added, "In front of a theatre audience I feel hemmed in but with the electricians and camera crews I am free to give expression to myself."

SIR CEDRIC HARDWICKE :

"Before the footlights the actor creates the character within himself, while before the camera he is a mere reproduction of the character as conceived by the author, as amended by the producer. Purely from the standpoint of creative art the screen which, after all, is only a black-and-white medium, cannot compare with the stage.

"The audience, for instance, is a continual sounding-board, and in sensing their reactions to a character an actor can heighten or lessen, and otherwise improve, his portrayal. All

this is absent in the studio. Studio-hands' criticism may be more incisive, but it is not as helpful!

"Many people on the screen are good actors but not all are trained actors. More craft, training and discipline are necessary on the stage, but on the screen—and I say this with all deference—*almost anyone can give a passable performance with a lot of patience on the part of the producer.*"

Later, he adds, "Stage-acting is an art: film-acting a science. One must be a more sincere performer for pictures than for the theatre, but no less artistic."

CONSTANCE COLLIER :

"Forget the stage if you want to be a screen actress."

ROBERT FLAHERTY :

"Acting is not necessary in films, because every effect desired can be got over by skilful cutting . . . all that is necessary is an absence of self-consciousness in the players."

FRANK BORZAGE :

"Acting, as such, has no place on the screen. Complete naturalness, above all else, is the thing to be attained. Theatricalism unfailingly destroys the very illusion we are trying to create. On the stage more latitude is permissible in registering important points in the action, since the player must 'get over' his emotions and his dialogue to the last rows of the stalls as well as the first: no such necessity exists in the cinema.

"I feel that a director should not attempt to play every role in his pictures, so impressing his own personality on every scene that the players lose their individuality. It is better to tell them what to feel rather than what to do, and to let them act, naturally, with a natural reaction to their own emotions."

PROFESSOR MAX REINHARDT :

"The impenetrable and eternal mysticism of the theatre starts at the point where the cinema leaves off. The cinema star can never experience those moments of ecstasy that enable the stage player to rise to the greatest heights: the moments when he feels that his performance is sweeping hundreds of spectators with him, that the crowds seated below him in the auditorium are spiritually soaring with him, holding their breath, on the wings of fantasy."

DOES THE SCREEN NEED ACTING?

ELIZABETH BERGNER :

"An audience's sympathy and response is part of the profession and practice of acting, a vital part of the performance. For this reason the theatre will always have an advantage over the cinema . . . in the studio the scenes are so short that it is impossible to become imbued with the conviction of a part. The strain of being imaginative in snippets, so to speak, is very exhausting . . . The direct hold on the audience is one of the greatest thrills of the theatre. The influence of friendly, human feeling means so much more than I can possibly express."

BOBBY HOWES :

"The *failure* of a film may be due to the work of the man with the scissors, but by no means always its success. If the cutter has to be called in to redress the faults of the film, then I say that the fault is first the producer's. If M. Komisarjevsky thinks that good acting is unnecessary on the screen, why does he not get hold of someone from the street—the first pretty girl he sees—for the leading part in a film? *That* ought to prove his case, *and* save his firm's money."

"Too much attention is paid to such bizarre things as 'artistic cutting'. Artistry does not count in films: they have to be commercial. If the two can be combined, so much the better, but people don't go to see 'a beautiful piece of artistry'. They go to see a film because So-and-So is playing in it. In the public eye the producer is incidental. Acting counts most, on stage *or* screen."

"For M. Komisarjevsky to say that the public sees only half-a-minute of every fifteen minutes of the film actor's best acting is absurd, for the shortest scene of any value takes several minutes, and if this is to be reduced to a matter of seconds, it might as well be cut altogether, or never be performed. If anything, even better acting is needed in a studio, for the absence of an audience throws more creative work on the actor."

LESLIE BANKS :

"Stage training is a handicap to screen players. Stage aspirants to film-fame will get to the top far quicker if they forget all they have ever learned in the theatre."

MAURICE CHEVALIER :

"The media are so absolutely different.

On the stage one can be more creative. One gets into contact with the audience and it is more like conversing intimately in a room. In acting before a microphone or a camera the conditions are quite changed, and one has to use much more imagination."

LAURENCE OLIVIER :

"The films can help you to buy your mother a Rolls-Royce, and your wife a house in the country. But I still don't believe they can help you to act."

DIANA WYNYARD :

"I should think that film-work has something to teach most stage actors, but I doubt whether the reverse is true—I mean whether film actors would benefit much if they were to take up stage work. Some of them would be entirely unsuited to it. They have charming personalities, but not sufficiently strong ones; they are personalities on a cameo scale, and, although they register perfectly before camera and microphone, they would not be powerful enough to grip large theatre audiences."

CONRAD VEIDT :

"The stage actor plays his part through in one evening; he can shape it gradually, build it up to a great climax, and as gradually descend to soberer levels, all in three hours: while the film actor has his work spread over six weeks or more. He has to build up emotions on a dead-cold technique, with no audience, with constant interruptions, in order to get a new camera-angle and with the merciless camera-eye always before him."

"But with all this I prefer film work. Perhaps its greatest fascination lies in the strange feeling that one has such vast audiences all over the world, that one's shadow exercises a mysterious influence on the emotions and thoughts of millions of people who will never see one in the flesh."

RUTH CHATTERTON :

"There is something inspiring in the theatre, contact with the audience, and their applause, which one misses terribly in films. All the time I am on the screen I am longing for the stage."



Photo: Edward Steichen

MOSES AND THE ANGEL OF DEATH.
ACT II. "THE ETERNAL ROAD" AS
PRODUCED BY PROF. MAX REINHARDT,
NEW YORK. *see page 115*

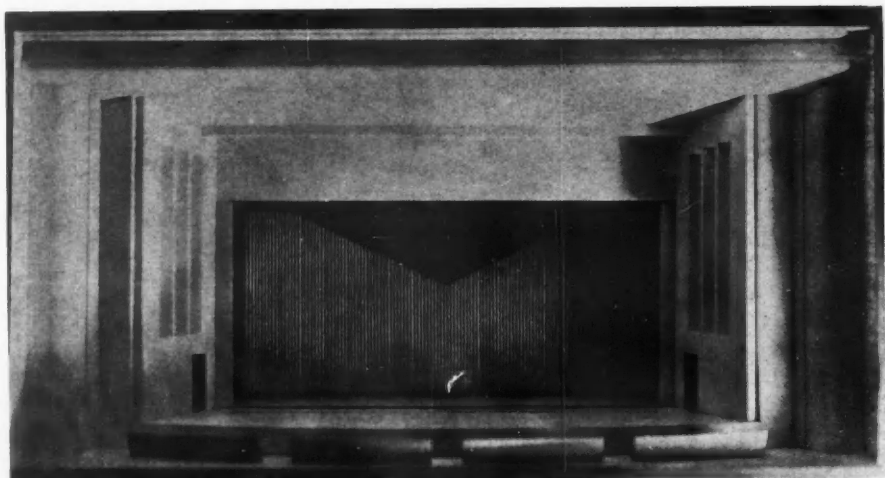


Photo : H. Baranger.

STAGE FOR THE NEW THEATRE
BUILT FOR THE PARIS EXHIBI-
TION TO BE OPENED IN MAY,
*with seating capacity for 3,000
people.*

DOES THE SCREEN NEED ACTING?

KING VIDOR :

"It is my conviction that the theatre must always be the laboratory of acting talent and dramatic ideas. Training in the theatre develops mental alertness and intentness of application. There is no finished player without these qualities, and never will be.

"The actor goes straight through his scene and his role. A motion-picture is shot without regard to continuity in the scenes, and this means that a player may have to deliver sections of his part day by day for a month or even more. And as a film actor does his lines over and over the director, of course, selects the 'take' that he considers the most satisfactory. The film actor must in any case get the most valuable part of his training on the old stage."

LESLIE HOWARD :

"Of all the creative arts of to-day, motion picture acting is the most sterile for the artist. In Hollywood the only individual who has the least chance to be creative is the director. He plans every scene, maps every move, and directs every posture. The actor becomes a puppet. I believe my place in the motion-picture world is in the writing, directing and producing end of it. I intend to be there Nothing can replace audience reaction. No actor who is not of the stage, or who does not get stage training, can remain long at the top as a screen star."

OWEN NARES :

"I have always insisted that great brains are quite inessential to an actor. To be successful he does not need them. A rhino hide is, however, immensely important and helpful. An actor must have those talents which enable him to impersonate and project his personality into a part. He needs certain other gifts, such as voice and good physique, but real good looks in a young actor are a definite handicap.

GEORGE ARLISS :

"The talking-picture is like a dress-rehearsal. It never gets those moments of inspiration when an audience lifts an actor out of himself. So I say that no player in pictures can ever be seen at his best."

EVA MOORE :

"Those theatre folk who say that the screen doesn't demand the genuine intensity of emotion and intellectual application of stage acting are so obviously and entirely wrong that one wonders where they could possibly find a basis for such a statement.

"Acting in the film studios not only demands quite as much as it does in the theatre (and produces results every whit as fine—Conrad Veidt's performances are a witness to this), but in a way it requires more. A greater concentration is necessary to achieve your effects; you must have the ability to shut away every distraction around you, lights, people, camera, microphone, everything outside the thoughts and emotions which that scene claims from you; you must, while remembering the restrictions of movement and gesture and the adjustment of tone, get yourself within imaginary four walls and create your own atmosphere without any of the assistance which the stage actor regards as a commonplace necessity."

RICHARD BIRD :

"Experience counts on the stage, where the player has to sustain the character he creates. To the experienced stage-actor screen work *seems* like child's play, but he is not always satisfied with the result, and it does not necessarily follow that it will result in a finished performance. I can quite understand that it is possible for a raw beginner to make a tremendous success in a film where it is a most unlikely thing in a play. It has happened in the theatre, but only in very rare circumstances.

"There have been unknowns who have stolen the thunder from experienced players in a film, but that can be due largely to the cutting and editing of the film, largely the way the director and the cutter have made that part *with their scissors*, rather than to any innate ability, beyond the necessary minimum, on the part of the performer."

A BRITISH STAGE STAR Who has just returned from Hollywood :

"The difference between stage and screen acting is about £800 a week."

* * * *

Now you have the pros and cons ! My own summary is this : No player who has ever

DOES THE SCREEN NEED ACTING?

walked the stage ceases to feel the loss of the presence of the audience. In the theatre he plays to a human element, often attuning his performance to the amount of response he is receiving from his auditors. In the studio he is playing to a mechanical instrument—the camera, or the microphone.

On the other hand, the screen demands a more natural style than the stage. No! It doesn't demand a 'style' at all, but plain,

downright, everyday behaviour, the more so because the close-up can bring the face, "the seat of the emotions," close to every member of the cinema-audience.

I am not indulging in the renowned British talent for compromise when I say that M. Komisarjevsky is right only in the sense that good acting, *in the stage interpretation of that term*, is beyond the orbit of the screen-player.

And now—let t'battle commence!

MARKS AND THE FESTIVAL

By W. A. Darlington

MR. RICHARD SOUTHERN'S letter on the subject of that difficult and still vexed question of adjudication in competitions, which appeared in the March number of "Drama," has led to much discussion and a good deal of correspondence. Some people have construed Mr. Southern's remarks as "an attack" on the marking system, which I do not think it was meant to be.

Mr. Whitworth has done me the honour to ask me, as the original adjudicator in the Festivals of Community Drama, to give my views. Here goes, then.

First of all, do I believe in the marking system myself? Yes, most emphatically I do. I regard it as not merely the best way, but the only possible way, of working a competition of the size to which the National Festival has grown.

Let me try to get down on paper my reasons for thinking so.

It is, I suppose indisputable that no method of judging works of art in comparison with one another can ever yield perfect results. What, then, is the method which is likely to give most complete satisfaction?

We have only to look about us to find the answer. In every human activity where people, animals or objects have to be examined and put in order of merit, the same method is used where possible. That method is to find one, two or three recognised experts on the matter in hand, to ask them to inspect all the exhibits, and to allow them to come to their own conclusions.

So long as these conditions are possible—so long, that is, as all the judges are people

who by temperament and training can rank as experts, and so long as all the judges can see all the exhibits, it is probably a matter of no great importance whether they use a marking system. Their decisions will be exactly the same, whether expressed in marks or not.

I will illustrate this, if I may, from my own experience. In 1925-26, when I was sole judge and had to travel from place to place to see each of the 7 entries, I used the marking system only as a rough guide. It was useful, certainly, to know that only 10% must be allowed for "choice of play," because in my ordinary work as dramatic critic I am accustomed to attach far more importance to the play than that. But it was obvious that marks awarded to one play in Bristol in November could have no exact comparative value in relation to marks given to another play in Lancashire in February. I therefore judged strictly by my own impression, awarding the prize to the performance which, on the whole, I felt I would most willingly visit again.

Next year, travelling round to the various district finals, I again went by impression and not by figures, and selected six plays to be brought to London; and (except in Scotland, where they were angry with me for attaching too little importance to niceties of Scottish dialect-speaking) I heard of no murmuring against the justice of my decisions. Now, here is the point. At the National Festival in London, I was joined by Miss Cathleen Nesbitt and Mr. John Drinkwater, and we were asked to use marks. We agreed among ourselves to have no consultation during the

MARKS AND THE FESTIVAL

performance, and that each of us should separately arrange the six plays in order of merit, and then compare notes. When we came to look at the lists, we found that, except in one trifling detail, *all three were identical*. We never needed to compare the individual markings at all.

That not merely saved us a great deal of time in arriving at our decision, but it also proved, I think, that knowledge of the theatre had enabled three people of very different temper and experience to apply a common standard of judgment. I have had a similar experience since then, when asked to judge a competition at a dramatic school jointly with Mr. Athole Stewart, the actor and producer. In this case Mr. Stewart and I were asked, not only to arrive at our judgments separately, but to improvise our own separate marking systems. I must confess that I expected all sorts of divergences of judgment here; but no. The reasons we gave for our awards frequently differed—the awards themselves coincided in every case.

We are, then, entitled to trust the experienced professional man or woman of the theatre to arrive at an equally sound decision with or without the aid of a set marking system. But a nation-wide competition involves conditions more complex than any which can obtain at a single performance, and the engagement of judges who may differ widely in outlook, experience, and habit of thought.

Therefore, it cannot be assumed that all these judges will achieve on their own account what I have called above a common standard of judgment, and as such a common standard is essential to a satisfactorily-run competition, it has to be impressed upon them from without.

Try how I will, I cannot imagine any way in which this can be managed except by the use of a marking system. Nor can I conceive that any great improvement can be made upon the marking system now used by the Drama League. It is elastic enough not to hamper the greatest expert; it is definite enough to keep him in mind of the particular circumstances of an amateur Festival.

True, the results it gives are not always exact; but then, nobody familiar with the use of marks would expect them to be. I have learnt a lot about marks in the last eight years because I have been during that time one of the examiners for a University Diploma. I

have discovered that no professor or other university don ever expects anything much from marks except a rough indication of a candidate's capacity. When he wants exact results—as, for instance, when he must decide whether a particular candidate deserves special distinction—he trusts his own impression, and adjusts the marks to fit if that proves necessary.

In other words, he knows that marks make good servants but shocking bad masters. He employs them for menial jobs only, and never trusts them too far or allows them to get out of hand. I think we should learn to do likewise.

NEW YORK'S INTERNATIONAL THEATRE.

Whatever may be America's attitude towards internationalism of the Geneva variety, it must be admitted that her principal city is to-day beyond a doubt the world's greatest single stronghold of internationalism in the theatre. New York City has recently offered opportunity to enjoy not only the work of American, French, German, Yiddish, and English dramatists (including Shakespeare and Wycherley), but also an amazingly international variety of fine actors, actresses and producers engaged in performing some of their most noteworthy services to the theatre.

The supreme achievement of the current season is perhaps the most international of them all. It is Max Reinhardt's staggering production of Franz Werfel's drama "The Eternal Road," for which an entire opera house in the heart of New York City was virtually pulled down and rebuilt. One hesitates to call this colossal affair a "spectacle" because of the persistent abuse of that word. Yet spectacle it is in the fullest meaning of the word.

The greatness of this overwhelming dramatization of the five Old Testament books generally credited to Moses lies not so much in the vastness of its stage pictures as it does in the epic sweep of the drama itself. To be sure, the settings, costumes and lighting provided by Norman Bel Geddes, and the magnificent score by the German expatriate, Kurt Weill, are in themselves sufficient to make of the piece something quite out of the ordinary.

But when all is said and done, it is the simple, profoundly affecting march of a little band of persecuted Jews back through the pages of their ancient faith, that held audiences breathless, often too deeply moved to weep. While the oppressor clamors at the door and the old Rabbi gathers his little flock about him on the lowest of the eight stage levels, there appears just above them an unadorned winding road that seems to stretch mysteriously up and beyond into infinity.

There is neither bathos nor sentimentality. The epic is too impersonal for that. Yet it is at the same time so grippingly personal to the spectator himself that he leaves the theatre exalted by what has been an unforgettable emotional experience. Here is Drama—not only for all nations, but for all peoples and all time.

PAUL SHINKMAN.

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE NOTES



THE JOURNAL OF
THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE
 INCORPORATING
 THE VILLAGE DRAMA SOCIETY

President :

LORD HOWARD DE WALDEN

Chairman of the Council :
 VISCOUNT Esher

Director : GEOFFREY WHITWORTH.

Hon. Treasurer : ALEC L. RFA.

MSS. for publication in DRAMA will be considered if accompanied by stamps for return if unsuitable. All enquiries should be addressed to the Hon. Secretary at the Office of the League, 9, Fitzroy Square, London, W.1.

Telephone : EUSTON 2666.

Neither the Editor nor the Drama League as a whole accepts any responsibility for the opinions expressed in signed articles printed in this Journal.

THE British Drama League joins in the general regret that will be felt at the death of Mr. John Drinkwater, which occurred at the early age of fifty-four on Thursday, March 25th. Drinkwater held an unusual position in the English theatre. His experience as actor, manager and dramatist, had been acquired as an amateur in those pre-war days which saw the birth of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre. After the war, "Abraham Lincoln" brought him, as it were in a flash, international fame, and a fortune which enabled him to develop many facets of a talent which was not only theatrical. Drama, however, remained his first pre-occupation, and as a publicist for all that is best and most important in the world of the stage, he did work which can ill be spared. John Drinkwater was always a good friend to the British Drama League. Only a few months ago he

presided at the inaugural meeting of the Birmingham Playgoers' Society, which, under the auspices of the League, was founded to support the professional theatre in that City.

John Drinkwater was an adept in many forms of literature besides the drama. But he never, we think, wrote a novel in the ordinary sense of the word. In recent years we remember distinguished works of fiction from the pens of Mr. Ernest Milton and Mr. Robert Speaight. And now comes Mr. Sladen-Smith with a story entitled "At Last We are Alone" which has just been published by the house of Constable. As might be expected, this is no ordinary novel, and even if we relate it to the school of Peacock, it is in no way to characterise it as an imitation. Mr. Sladen-Smith is always himself, and this dream-like picture of the adventures of a modern knight-errant in the Marches of Wales, will fascinate those who already appreciate this author's genius for whimsy, and will win him many a new devotee.

Readers interested in the development of Drama in Schools should send to the League for particulars of the Conference on School Drama which is to take place at the Florence Restaurant, London, on Saturday, April 10th. This Conference is being held under the auspices of the recently established "School Drama Committee" of the League, under the Chairmanship of Mr. Guy Boas. Other pages in the present issue of "Drama" give evidence of the growth of interest in the subject in so many academic quarters at the present time.

On the night after the Coronation a great Costume Ball will be held at the Albert Hall, London, in aid of the National Theatre. Full particulars may be obtained from the Drama League.

At the final performance of the British Drama League Community Theatre Festival at the Old Vic on Monday evening, May 31st, the adjudication will be delivered by Mr. Norman Marshall.

RECENT BOOKS

Reviewed by F. Sladen-Smith

- "From Richardson to Pinero." By Frederick S. Boas. John Murray. 8s. 6d.
 "Four Dramas of Euripides." Translated by Hugh Owen Meredith, M.A. Allen & Unwin. 7s. 6d.
 "The Infernal Machine." By Jean Cocteau. Oxford University Press. 7s. 6d.
 "Poetry Speaking for Children." Part III. By Marjorie Gullan and Percival Gurrey. Methuen. 3s. 6d.
 "Acting Improvised." By Robert G. Newton. Nelson. 2s. 6d.
 "Peasant Costume of the Black Forest." By Dora W. Pettigrew. A. & C. Black. 7s. 6d.
 "The Bishop Misbehaves." By Frederick Jackson. French. 2s. 6d.
 "Glass Houses." By Walter Ellis. French. 2s.
 "Girl in Question." By Wilfred Massey. Play Rights and Publications. 2s.
 "Ozymandias the King." By Dorothy Hewlett. Muller. 1s.
 "Maker of Highways." By F. Austin Hyde. Deane and Sons. 1s.

"FROM Richardson to Pinero" is not, in any strict sense, a theatrical work, although Edmund Kean's strange life is described, and Sir Arthur Pinero brings the book to a close. But Professor Boas' essays on different aspects of fiction, poetry and drama, are so filled with penetrating criticism gracefully phrased and expressed (adjudicators please take note!), that no one interested in any form of literature can afford to miss them. Probably, one of the most fascinating deals with Elizabeth Barrett Browning—one is left with the impression of having met the poetess herself—while, throughout, Professor Boas is an adept at making us reconsider our judgments in the light of present-day experience, especially with regard to Tennyson. The essay on Pinero will bring back memories to the veterans but surely it is a mistake to state that it is Aubrey Tanqueray who commits suicide.

Professor Hugh Owen Meredith, presumably as a relaxation from the study of economics, and stimulated by his experiences as a producer, has translated the Hecuba, Heracles, Andromache and Orestes of Euripides endeavouring to bring a more modern atmosphere and outlook into a world which is often regarded as impossibly remote from ours. If it remains true that the "real" Euripides is incompletely accessible to the modern mind, these translations should be accessible enough, especially as there are character and production notes for each play, and the dialogue owes little to classical standards. "Ochone!" makes an early appearance, followed by "down, derry, derry, down"; we hear of "Miss Electra" among other surprises, and the general effect is more Gilbertian than Greek, or, as Professor Meredith would have us say, what is usually regarded as Greek. Still more drastic re-statements of a classic theme are to be found in M. Jean Cocteau's "The Infernal Machine," translated by Mr. Carl Wildman, whose admirable rendering of "Orphée" will be remembered. But the Oedipus myth, treated in this case with both Gallic frankness as well as finish, may not prove so acceptable as the bewildering, but not unpleasing complexities of "Orphée." Also, it is a question if the play contains as much strange stage

magic, although the scene with the Sphinx is memorable, and the general construction singularly effective. But, despite Mr. Wildman's excellent introduction, if the people who felt themselves capable of tackling "Orphée" were few, still fewer will have the courage to present this terrible but fascinating play to the astonished gaze of the English playgoer.

"Poetry Speaking for Children," Part III, by Miss Marjorie Gullan and Mr. Percival Gurrey, is for senior work, and is a closely written book, dealing with such problems as rhythm, dialogue, ballad acting and choric drama generally. It is obvious that the attitude adopted throughout—that teachers are guides, not dictators, and that to the children an appreciation of poetry should seem a natural and delightful addition to their lives—is the only sound one; and the many poems given have been carefully chosen with regard to their dramatic possibilities in class work, although, in our opinion, the "Lyke-Wake Dirge" is too morbid for youngsters. Mr. Robert G. Newton's "Acting Improvised" breaks new ground; and will be especially useful for the rapidly developing dramatic work of unemployed groups and social settlements, where many people, at least at first, seem more hampered than helped by the written play. Mr. Newton has had considerable experience of his subject, and describes the whole theory and practice of improvisation, giving at the end many examples or suggestions for improvised plays of all types. While some of these are full of possibilities, one or two appear to be somewhat aimless, but it can be argued with truth that improvisation is full of surprises, and the simplest, crudest scenarios sometimes yield the best results.

There are few parts of Europe left in which traditional costumes and age-long traditions can be found in such perfection as in the remote villages of the Schwarzwald, and Miss Dora W. Pettigrew in her "Peasant Costume of the Black Forest" has both drawn and described many fascinating examples of strange and delightful attire in which the men, for once, allow themselves as much (or nearly as much) simple-hearted gaiety as the women. The illustrations are vigorous, and aim at presenting peasant types rather than amiable lay-figures.

There are three long plays in the list, all comedies, of which much the best is Mr. Frederick Jackson's "The Bishop Misbehaves," in which an urbane Bishop, assisted by his delightful sister, plays havoc with a gang of amateur crooks, first by abducting the swag, and then by outwitting them in a series of scenes as amusing as they are impossible. Much careful work has gone to the making of Mr. Walter Ellis's "Glass Houses," but it is nullified by a tenuous plot which concerns mild matrimonial complications and some mysterious papers. The papers eventually restore a handsome son to a supposedly maiden aunt (thereby softening her remarkably) and the complications are solved by the usual method of an extremely busy man throwing work to the winds and indulging in a sudden holiday with his wife—an insane proceeding which, in numbers of plays, is taken to guarantee unalloyed future happiness. In a prefatory note to his play "Girl in Question," Mr. Wilfred Massey assures us that we shall find "the fooling and the laughs" which we already expect from

RECENT BOOKS

the author of "Happy Days," but in addition there will be quite a lot of drama, conflict and interplay of emotion; and, in a lengthy description of the characters and how to play them, states that his hero and heroine will have been in popular favour throughout, and their discovery that they love each other will be acclaimed with universal satisfaction. After this it seems superfluous to review a play which is certainly actable, frequently farcical, and sometimes absurd. Just before the curtain falls the hero exclaims "Suffering Mackerel—this is great!", and as some audiences will undoubtedly agree with him, the author's high opinion of the piece will receive justification.

Miss Dorothy Hewlett, in her one-act "Ozymandias the King," works in a familiar Eastern convention—which, after all, is no more familiar than the eternal kitchen convention. Her play is not only interesting, but the idea of the symbolical "Little Man" who dops the king, forcing him to voluntary abdication, has both poetic and dramatic value. "Maker of Highways" is Mr. F. Austin Hyde's first serious one-act play, and in its utter simplicity has affinities with the old moralities. It is extremely short, and we reach the happy, if none too convincing, ending, in a hurry, but there are many who will be moved by its sincerity.

THE PROSCENIUM ON THE AMATEUR DRAMATIC STAGE

By R. L. Jones

CONSIDERING the care and attention spent on most branches of amateur production, it is remarkable that very few amateur producers seem to realise the importance of their front curtain and proscenium. For the half-hour that elapses between the opening of the doors and the raising of the curtain, an audience is expected to feast its eyes upon an unsightly conglomeration of canvas, boards, and plywood, erected palpably as a barrier screening the antics of a perspiring stage carpenter, a flustered stage manager, and an excited property man, whose presence is disclosed by sundry noises and more or less gentle ripples of the curtain.

The screening of the set is admittedly the paramount object of the proscenium, and without it the whole illusion of the modern play would be lost. This, however, does not justify the use of the unsightly makeshifts so often seen at amateur performances.

The question of cost is no reason for this. I have seen a number of attractive fronts which have been put together for a few shillings, whereas many expensive and elaborate articles are so made as to appear about as attractive as the interior of a prison cell; in fact, this is the impression that quite a number do convey to the audience.

To present an audience at the start of a performance with a spectacle so depressing is to put it out of humour for an entire evening, giving the company the task of counteracting

this ill-humour, in addition to putting the author's conception over the footlights.

Personally, in common with many other dramatic enthusiasts, I consider these unsightly fronts to be tantamount to an insult, in so far as those responsible have forgotten, if only for a time, that the most important person at a performance is the spectator.

A stage manager and stage carpenter are admittedly at a disadvantage when working on many small-town stages, owing to the inartistic and often extremely limited or inconvenient accommodation. This is probably due to the architect's conception of a public hall as a place in which to hold concerts and political meetings.

These difficulties, however, are far from insurmountable, and a little ingenuity and forethought, with perhaps a very little expense, will be amply repaid by the audience's goodwill, and the satisfaction that comes of a good job well done.

The only normal front for an amateur performance seems to be the picture-frame variety, but the slavish adherence to the roller type of curtain is, in my opinion, a grave mistake—especially for companies that are compelled to travel. It is both cumbersome and inefficient; it seems incapable of being raised except by a series of jerky fits and starts to the slow music of unoiled pulleys, and as often as not the descent is terminated by a soul-shattering bump that spells *Finis* to any

THE PROSCENIUM ON THE AMATEUR STAGE

illusion the actors may have laboured to create.

It is often amusing to see one of these blinds depicting perhaps a pastoral landscape, as most do, slowly disappear to reveal, feet first, a group of actors in an entirely incongruous set, only to reverse this process at the end of the act. This effect is made much worse if the author asks for a slow curtain, the actors at one stage of the descent being as effectively beheaded as any victim of the French Revolution.

The alternatives to this are the types of curtain that are either pulled up from the centre to drape from the corners under the pelmet; or are carried on a rail and hidden behind the pilasters.

Both these demand care in making and manipulating, but are definitely superior in effect, especially when the crux of the closing scene lies on the centre of the stage. When this crux lies to either side a slow curtain should be slow only until it has passed the centre of interest, and then be closed as quickly as possible.

These draw curtains also are often subject to the drawback of noisy pulleys. To avoid this, pulleys should be replaced by dead eyes or fairleads, that is blocks of hardwood in which holes are made very smooth for the ropes to run through. With a good manilla rope these will be found to be quite as light to work as pulleys and in addition to being silent have nothing to go wrong.

Where the curtains are too heavy for these great care should be given to the choice of pulleys; brass or whitemetal bushes are essential; the pulleys being preferably of wood.

If the bushes are kept oiled and the wood given an occasional dressing of linseed oil these should give no trouble.

The person operating the curtain should practise opening and closing it with very steady movements in order to avoid any distracting jerks which are so detrimental to the effectiveness of a performance.

The curtain, above all things, should give a purely negative impression. It should give no hint of what lies beyond: for the audience it should represent the end of the world: its raising should be the opening of a window into a new world—a world in which anything may happen, but a world from which it is cut off, and in the life of which it has no part except that of spectator.

The advent of this world upon the senses should be as gentle and natural as the coming of a dream. Nothing is more likely to destroy this illusion than a clumsy curtain, which keeps the audience conscious of a barrier deliberately placed between it and that something beyond which it has come to see. The more instantaneous the raising of the curtain, the more perfect is the illusion. Authors and producers may, and often do, call for a slow curtain, but the effect will always be far from satisfactory. Let the end be held as long as is necessary, but let the drop be a clean break, otherwise what is obtained is a piecemeal disappearance of actors, set, and, but too often, of illusion.

A very satisfactory solution I saw used by one company was dimming the lights to total darkness, opening the curtain, and by turning on the lights revealing the set in its entirety. At the end of the act this process was reversed, the lights being dimmed slowly or rapidly to give a slow or quick curtain, the curtain actually being drawn during the short period of total darkness. A condition essential to the satisfactory working of this method is that the curtain should be capable of being drawn with absolute silence. This was assured, by the replacing of the pulleys with dead eyes. With the silence and the darkness, the sudden revealing of the transition was as natural as the breaking of dawn.

Other methods have been tried with varying success, but each case must be taken on its merits; what is possible in one place may be well nigh impossible in another.

Simplicity should always be the keynote, both in the design and the method of operating proscenium curtains, as anything elaborate tends to draw the audience's attention, thereby interfering with the unity of the performance.

Failure to consider a dramatic performance as a composite whole is often the cause of one aspect being given undue prominence. Plot and acting are given more prominence than the set in most cases, but it is not unusual for the conscientious and capable stage carpenter to steal the thunder that should rightly belong to the play. Even noises off have, on occasion, been overdone, thus making the play accessory to the sound. It is rare, however, for the proscenium to receive this prominence: it is the Cinderella of stagecraft.

A producer would be very reluctant to cast an actor whose voice was not pleasant for any

THE PROSCENIUM ON THE AMATEUR STAGE

part not definitely calling for such a voice. He would not cast a repulsive-featured actor for any part not calling for such a featured character, so much so that the term actor has almost become synonymous with good looks. This the producer does because he realises that it is his duty to give his audience all the enjoyment he can during the performance. He appeals to that love of the aesthetic which, consciously or subconsciously, lies in every playgoer.

It is but a step from this to realising the importance of an attractive proscenium and front curtain. First impressions, we are told,

are important, and nowhere are they more so than in an amateur performance. Actors, authors, and producers, all concentrate on securing an effective opening scene. Why not anticipate this by securing an effective proscenium? This would give the audience the last moiety for their money, and at so little additional expense to the producer.

Readers who desire more technical information on the building of a proscenium are invited to communicate with the author of this article, care of the British Drama League. Mr. Jones will be pleased to give advice for a moderate fee commensurate with the amount of work involved.

A NOTE ON THE STAGE SOCIETY

By Emanuel Wax

IT is a far cry from that summer's evening in 1899, when some forty "persons known to be interested in Dramatic Art" met at 17, Red Lion Square, and decided to "organise a small society for the production of plays." Sunday night play producing societies have become a recognised institution, but the Stage Society, by virtue of its unswerving faith in and rigid adherence to its original policy, still occupies a unique position in the theatre.

This policy was to encourage the writing of plays in England, which, while being notable examples of dramatic art, might for some impermanent consideration of the West End manager or the Lord Chamberlain be unacceptable to the commercial theatre; and to introduce to the English public the best plays of contemporary foreign dramatists. It was in this faith and to the realisation of this object that, in 1903, the Stage Society introduced to its audience the work of a dramatist who until then had not had any plays produced—"A Man of Honour" by Somerset Maugham—only to be told by an eminent critic of the day that "the potential dramatist graciously revealed to us has no special qualifications for the stage whatever." Again in 1912, when the Stage Society, not apparently without some trepidation, decided to produce "The Cherry Orchard" by the unknown Russian author Chekhov, a note was inserted in the

programme to the effect that "members are requested to keep their seats during the actual performance and to leave the theatre only during the intervals."

Whether or not there has been a lack of original English talent during the last few years, the Stage Society has not been successful in unearthing any young dramatist of promise since Sherriff and Van Druten—the latter having been first discovered by Mrs. Geoffrey Whitworth's "Three Hundred" Club during its period of amalgamation with the Society. But it has continued to serve the cause of writers in the English language by providing a stage for the plays of Eugene O'Neill and Elmer Rice, two acknowledged masters, whose work has thus first been seen in this country. Moreover it has remained a notable channel by which original foreign plays reach the English stage as witness Giraudoux's "Intermezzo," and Cocteau's "La Machine Infernale," which, as Desmond MacCarthy said recently, "had hints galore for the modern dramatist."

This season the Stage Society is presenting three plays at the Westminster Theatre, varied in subject matter and rich in interest.

The first "Angelica" (April 11) by Leo Ferrero is one which breathes the theatrical tradition of centuries. The author, an Italian exile, who was unfortunately killed in a motor accident in 1933, achieved considerable fame during his lifetime as poet, philosopher and biogra-



Photo: Edith Tudor Hart.

SCENE FROM "WAITING FOR LEFTY"
BY CLIFFORD ODETS AS PRODUCED BY
THE UNITY THEATRE. *see page 115.*



"TOBIAS AND THE ANGEL."
(ACT III, SCENE II.) AS
PRODUCED BY THE HERE-
FORD COMMUNITY PLAYERS.

THE STAGE SOCIETY

pher. After his death this play was discovered among his papers. It is a delicate satirical phantasy on the philosophic theme of Liberty. The protagonists, Orlando and Angelica are taken from the "Orlando Furioso" of Ariosto. And beneath a light, humorous and unsophisticated exterior the author discusses the most urgent problems of the modern world.

Strindberg's "The Road to Damascus" (May 2) should need no introduction. Structurally resembling Dante's Divine Comedy, it is an autobiographical projection of the pilgrimage of a soul, eventually finding redemption through a woman's love. Unfortunately, although Strindberg has, until recently, figured in the repertoire of every state theatre in Germany, he is an author who has never been appreciated at his true worth in this country.

The third play (Mry 30) is biographical: but it is an experiment. The author, François Porche, has refrained from imposing dramatic elements on a life which, he feels, contains sufficient intrinsic drama to allow its presentation on the stage to be almost entirely photographic. To achieve his purpose within the limits of three walls and hours, it has been necessary for the author to ignore the usual time and space conventions of the theatre, and a play which could have held the attention of an audience by its subject alone, acquires additional interest by virtue of this technical experiment.

This programme is surely an effective answer to those who fear that the Stage Society's work is done. Nor is it the only one. Who shall say that the English theatre will not soon again produce writers of the calibre of Bernard Shaw and Granville-Barker? And what guarantee is there that the theatrical world as a whole will be any readier to greet these new great men of the future than it was to welcome the great figures of the past? Shaw has admitted that but for the Stage Society he would have forsaken dramatic writing.

Granville-Barker referred to it as both father and mother. It is well that the writers of the future should have the same opportunity of seeing their work on the stage, the same inspiration of knowing that there is a Society which will present them to the public in the face of opposition by that public itself, if it feels that the plays will appeal to the ultimate public, for whom every dramatist should write.

Full particulars from the Secretary, 32, Shaftesbury Avenue, London, W.1.

THE ENGLISH SCHOOL THEATRE

By Beatrice King

This new organisation recently gave its first production of "Julius Caesar" at several matinees at the Victoria Palace, London. As will be seen, its aim is to provide first-class dramatic performances, professionally acted, for Schools.

IF I had ever had any doubt as to the importance both to the school and the theatre of co-operation between these two great institutions the experience of our first production would certainly have dispelled it. Great indeed is the need for this co-operation.

The Society's first production—"Julius Caesar," played for eight performances at the Victoria Palace to packed houses of boys and girls, has revealed many things, but nothing so clearly as that the theatre needs the school and the school the theatre.

The response to the request for written criticisms was much greater than I had anticipated, showing how keenly interested pupils were.

What conclusions can be drawn from this our first experience, what judgments can be formed? Certainly not any serious ones about the attitude of boys and girls to Shakespeare. To generalise from as little data as we have would be unscientific and irrational. In order to arrive at reliable conclusions on this matter investigations and observation would need to be carried out all over the country with many and varied types of children. The period for investigation should be at least a year.

Let me illustrate. The majority of boys and girls when asked about the next play said "Not Shakespeare," but they did not give any reasons for their objection to Shakespeare. On the other hand I know at least one school where even the twelve year olds are so thrilled with Shakespeare that they quote him on any and every occasion, whether the occasion be apposite or not. It may be that those who contend that Shakespeare should not be taken with children before fourteen years, are right. They are probably right when they insist that the first introduction to Shakespeare should be by way of the theatre. These points will only be settled after long co-operation between the school and the theatre.

THE ENGLISH SCHOOL THEATRE

The reasons for liking the play in the theatre were interesting. "It makes the play more vivid when you do it in school." "It helps you to understand it better for examinations." "It clears up things which were not clear in the class rooms." Clearly the theatre helps the school. The criticism was very illuminating. Almost all the criticism referred to details of realism in the production, criticism which showed clearly that these children had been nurtured on the realism of the cinema and did not know how to listen in the theatre. This is not to run down the cinema. The latter can do wonderful things in its own sphere, things quite impossible to the cinema, but its sphere is not the same. The cinema and the theatre are two very different art forms requiring an entirely different approach. Now whereas the children had all learnt the approach to the cinema, very few of them had learnt how to listen in the theatre. They had come to the theatre with a cinema mind so that the demands made by the production on their imagination and on their ears failed. They expected primarily to satisfy their eyes and when this was not achieved they registered criticism. Thus they noticed that Cassius wore armour when he offered his "naked breast," that he looked neither "lean" nor "hungry."

There were interesting suggestions—Browning's "Strafford" by a school; "Iphigenia" and "The Suppliant Women" by a girl. With rare exceptions the letters from pupils and Heads alike were full of enthusiasm for our movement and appreciation for the work done.

Those who organised the production are firmly convinced that given the support that the schools and the theatre might be expected to give, a wonderful movement will be created. The defects in the last production were solely due to lack of funds before beginning work. With the experience we have had and with the support we hope to receive, there is no question but that the second production will give even more satisfaction to our critical young audiences than did the first.

The schools were asked to vote for the next production from the following plays: "She Stoops to Conquer," "Henry V.," "Strife" and "The Great Adventure." The result was in the order given, "She Stoops to Conquer" well ahead. "Henry V." was chosen by many schools because it was an examination play. Indeed one Headmistress stated that she was only interested in this play.

DRAMA IN YUGOSLAVIA

Shakespeare has long been popular in Yugoslavia, especially in the universities, but now audiences are responding warmly to our modern dramatists. Somerset Maugham's "For Services Rendered" has had a good reception in Belgrade and in Zagreb, the well-known Belgrade actress, Roksanda Luković, having scored a success in it. What is perhaps more remarkable is that the film of "As you like it" is captivating crowds who can only follow the meaning by the written captions, and yet listen eagerly to the long Shakespearean speeches, such as the "Seven Ages of Man."

In fact Drama seems to be booming in the provincial towns (the spelling of the names of which is a severe task for English compositors), as well as in the permanent theatres of Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana. Of the Yugoslav dramatists, Miroslava Krleža, who has considerable literary skill and insight into character, has recently had two plays running, "Leda" and "In Camp." The veteran playwright Pecija Petrovic has celebrated his thirty-fifth year of theatrical life by the production of a new play, "In the Old Nest." It is a romantic drama, with the admirable technique of an experienced actor.

Successful drama is difficult in a country with such a medley of languages, perhaps English may become its Esperanto!

A. J. GREGORY NICHOLSON.

BRADFIELD PLAY.

The play selected for this year's performance is the "Oedipus Tyrannus" of Sophocles. It will be performed at 3 p.m. on Saturday, June 19th, Tuesday, the 22nd, Thursday the 24th, and Saturday the 26th. On each of the days of the play the 12.30 p.m. train from Paddington will stop at Theale at 1.25 p.m. A train will return from Theale at 7.15, arriving at Paddington at 8.10. Omnibuses will meet these trains and will take visitors back to Theale after the Play.

The Headmaster is kind enough to invite any members of the British Drama League to see the play if they will apply for an invitation form before May 1st. Such applications should be sent to the Honorary Secretary, Greek Play Committee, Bradfield College, Berks.

A FESTIVAL AT CANTERBURY.

A Festival Service of the Arts and Crafts will be held in Canterbury Cathedral on Saturday, June 12th, at 5.30 p.m. There will also be an invitation performance to the Festival Play by Dorothy L. Sayers entitled "The Zeal of Thy House," from 2.30 to 4 p.m.

Provided sufficient traffic is forthcoming, the Southern Railway will provide special trains.

Invitations and cards of admission can be obtained by members of the British Drama League on application to Miss Babington, The Hon. Festival Manager, Christ Church Gateway, Canterbury.

Mr. Rivington Holmes (whose article "A Theatre for To-day: II" appeared in last month's issue) writes to inform us that the patent application mentioned in connection with his stage was abandoned earlier this year and that there is now no restriction on the use of the ideas which he put forward. It was through an oversight on his part that a note to this effect was not submitted to be inserted last month.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

UNITY THEATRE CLUB.

The advantage or disadvantage of propaganda in stage plays is a subject frequently debated, and the question is raised again in a practical manner by the productions now being given by the Unity Theatre Club, Britannia Street, Gray's Inn Road, King's Cross, W.C.1. The Club consists of an enthusiastic band of amateur actors and actresses who, with the active help of professional producers, are putting on plays of the Left Wing propagandist type.

The other night "Waiting for Lefty," the well-known Chicago Strike Play by Clifford Odets, was performed, together with "Where's That Bomb?," a censored play by two working class dramatists, Mr. Roger Gullan and Mr. Buckley Roberts. This play deals with the attempted exploitation of a young writer's genius for capitalist propaganda. He is to be well paid for writing an anti-socialist story which is then to be distributed throughout the country by means unmentionable in polite society. The young writer nearly succumbs to the temptation, but is rescued by a dream in which the characters in his story refuse to play the parts assigned to them. He wakes up steeled against his temptation, and ready for a life of sincerity and starvation.

"Waiting for Lefty" is too well known to need further description here. It suffices to say that both plays were performed with an extreme vivacity which carried all before it. Whatever one thinks of the propaganda, one is forced to admit that here were a band of amateurs who stood out head and shoulders above the majority of their peers. It is not untrue to say that many amateur actors lack the passion which the experienced professional is able to assume imaginatively. This lack was supplied in the case of the Unity Theatre Players by a passion which was real and not assumed. They were the mouthpiece of a doctrine which thrilled them, and they were able to convey their emotion to the audience since they had obviously undergone a lengthy and obedient training under a producer who knew his job.

The Unity Theatre Club seeks larger premises in Camden Town. Those, of whatever political complexion, who are interested in a remarkable effort in dramatic expression should communicate with the Secretary of the Club at the address given above.

G. W.

HENDON LITTLE THEATRE SOCIETY.

In aid of the Women's League of Service for Motherhood three performances of Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth's "Haunted Houses" were given recently at the Rudolf Steiner Hall.

This Society is lucky in the help of Mr. J. H. Trustram whose scenery for the play was beautifully designed and always effective. The play itself was excellently produced by Mr. Rex Thomas.

Of the players, we would specially commend Mr. Alec Speers as Lucifer, Mr. Shirley Rainer and Miss Stella Lang as John and Mary (although the latter's rendering was, perhaps, a little too flirtatious), and all the actors who took part in the third episode.

"KING LEAR" AT RADLEY COLLEGE.

The production of "King Lear" at Radley in March should remain memorable for a remarkable feat of courage and application. The boy cast for Lear having fallen ill a few days before the opening night, another boy, N. J. Cely Trevilian, learnt the part in three days and played it with such assurance and distinction that, had the facts not been made known, no one would have suspected any change of plan. This remarkable achievement tended to obscure the ability with which J. L. Bell accomplished the part of Edmund at two days notice, the original Edmund having followed the original Lear to the sanatorium: and it is noteworthy that these two courageous substitutes—even allowing that they had both won distinction in former productions of the school, gave easily the best performances. Mr. Trevilian portrayed Lear's passionate senile power with almost uncanny skill, and Mr. Bell spoke Edmund's superb passages of prose with fine rhythm and relish. V. D. Mann distinguished himself as Oswald, D. H. Richards as Edgar raved with moving effect in the farmhouse, and D. S. Maxwell and A. E. G. Baynes directed the blinding of Gloucester with grim fire. Mr. C. P. T. Wrinch, the producer, and Mr. T. L. B. Huskinson are to be warmly congratulated on the excellence of the scenery and many highly effective tableaux.

G. B.

SLOANE SCHOOL, CHELSEA.

"Macbeth" was recently given for five performances to a crowded audience on each occasion. It may be said at once that Mr. Guy Boas, the Headmaster of the School, and the producer of the play, has achieved a standard in dramatic work not often surpassed in schools. In this production, R. H. Beckett as Lady Macbeth particularly distinguished himself, and good performances were also given by W. S. R. Shaw as Macbeth, by A. A. Peters as MacDuff, and by the three Witches trained in dance-like rhythm by Miss Anny Boalth.

A really exquisite sketch was also given by K. J. D. Busby, as the Son of MacDuff. Scenery and music were always outstanding features, but we think it is a pity to have re-introduced the witches for the finale. At this point Scone's fresh air is best.

ERITH COUNTY SCHOOL FOR BOYS.

The Erith County School for Boys held a very successful Inter-House Play Competition on March 12th and 13th. Four Houses competed, and the "White House" playing "The Man in the Bowler Hat" were awarded the first place by the judge, Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth. The runner-up was "Green House" in Mr. Sladen-Smith's play "The Invisible Duke." A notable feature of the drama work in this School is that the marks obtained by the Houses in the Drama competition are included in those awarded for other branches of work and sport, so that in the total marks won by each House for a term's work, Drama figures on the same basis as other items in the curriculum.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

LONDON SCHOOLS' GUILD OF ARTS AND CRAFTS DRAMA FESTIVAL.

The final performance in this first Festival of Drama organised by the Guild was held at Sadler's Wells Theatre on March 1st. The theatre was crowded to capacity to witness eight plays given by elementary and secondary schools in the London area. The Festival had been held by permission of the L.C.C. Education Committee, and the scenes had been selected from a large number of preliminary rounds. The final performance was not on a competitive basis. There were no speeches, and the plays were simply presented to be enjoyed.

On the whole, it seemed to the Drama League critic that the younger children did best. Their scenes from "Toad of Toad Hall," "The Blue Bird" and the old Mumming Play, "S. George and the Dragon," were really excellent, and one came away with the exhilaration of knowing that in many London Schools to-day, some of them in very poor districts, the art of the living theatre is being practised and enjoyed to an extent unbelievable a few years ago.

The London Schools' Guild of Arts and Crafts are to be congratulated on a very fine enterprise which we hope will continue to flourish in years to come.

LONDON FEDERATION OF BOYS' CLUBS.

One of the ways in which the London Federation of Boys' Clubs is celebrating its Jubilee year is by holding the Final of their annual Dramatics Competition at the Sadler's Wells Theatre on the evening of Monday, April 26th. All the pieces performed will be extracts from one or other of Shakespeare's plays. The standard usually attained in the Final of this competition is really high, and this year's Final should be no exception.

The prices of the reserved seats vary from 1s. to 5s., and tickets can be obtained from the Headquarters of the Federation, 222, Blackfriars Road, S.E.1. (Telephone No. WATerloo 5540), or from the Box Office, Sadler's Wells Theatre. There will be a limited number of unreserved seats at 6d.

We recommend this event very particularly to those organisations which are represented on our Junior Drama Committee.

BRADFORD.

Under the auspices of the City of Bradford Education Committee the students of the Shakespearean Class of the Carlton Street Senior Evening Institute performed "As You Like It" for five nights from February 16th.

The production was under the direction of Mr. and Mrs. Greenwood who have done so much for the cause of Shakespearean drama in Bradford.

The production was staged in curtains in the Elizabethan manner, and the costumes were excellent.

Among the more notable individual performances were those of Miss Enid Bottomley as Rosalind, Miss Anne Walton as Celia, and Mr. Arthur Boardman as the melancholy Jaques.

Dr. Coddington (Bradford's Stipendiary Magistrate) attended a performance, and was warm in his praise for the fine team work displayed by the cast and the keenness shown by every member.

PROPOSED NOTTINGHAM LITTLE THEATRE.

Two years ago a meeting was called by Mr. Nevil Truman to discuss the possibility of forming a new theatre for Nottingham. Several subsequent meetings of delegates have been held but they have been unable to make up their minds whether they want a costly scheme on a central site, or a cheaper one further away. The question as to the theatre being wholly professional, wholly amateur, or a combination of both has also been reopened and no decision has been made. Mr. Nevil Truman was unanimously re-elected Chairman and is calling a public meeting in University College in April, when he has secured as speaker, Mr. Alderman Huntman who was prominently associated with the formation of the Compton Repertory Theatre, and with the founding of the Nottingham Playgoers' Club.

GERMAN PLAYERS FOR SCHOOLS.

Mr. Maurice Browne has lately interested himself in a company of professional German players, "Die Wanderbühne," who have a permit to perform German classics (in German and for a strictly limited period) in Great Britain for educational purposes.

They recently presented their first play, Lessing's "Minna von Barnhelm" with great success in the hall of Christ's College, Finchley. A second performance was given at the Conway Hall two days later.

Schools or other educational institutions interested in this unusual opportunity should communicate at once with Mr. Maurice Browne, 10, Golden Square, London, W.1., as a tour throughout England and Scotland is now being arranged.

"MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL."

Mr. T. S. Eliot's "Murder in the Cathedral" still continues its triumphant career, and has returned to London for a short season at the Duchess Theatre.

It was first produced at the Canterbury Festival in 1935 and has since then been professionally performed by the Mercury Theatre Company in London, Leeds, Oxford, Cambridge, Newcastle, Brighton, Bournemouth, Glasgow, and in other cities. Amateur productions of the play have also been given by the Un-Named Society, Manchester, and, more recently, by the Ripon Drama Club, where a production by Miss Audrey Sykes has won high praise. One of the audience writes: "It was the high level of the Drama Club's production last week that enabled us to appreciate the greatness of the play."

In a few weeks time, Mr. Ashley Dukes will go out to New York to supervise the first production of the play in America.

SUNDAY THEATRE PLAY COMPETITION.

The Sunday Theatre offers a prize of 10 guineas for the best 3-act play submitted by the 1st September, 1937, written in conformity with its ideas and ideals.

The winning play will be presented in the West End in the autumn. Dame Sybil Thorndike (President of the S.T.) has expressed her willingness to appear in the first production, which will have a strong supporting cast. Full particulars of the aims of the Sunday Theatre and the type of plays wanted from: May Haysac, 66, Lancaster Gate, W.2.

E.

vil
ew
aga
to
me
he
al,
en
vil
is
ril,
ts-
na-
he

in
die
an
in

g's
all
ce

ed
at
re,
ot-

ill
to

in
ed
ls,
e-
o-
n-
by
ss
he
na
p-

ut
he

or
r,

nd
of
in
p-
ne
:

ST. PANCRAS PEOPLE'S THEATRE

Charrington Street, Crowndale Road, N.W.1

TEL: EUSTON 1769

Under the Direction of EDITH NEVILLE
Producer and Manager PHYLLIS KINDERSLEY

APRIL PERFORMANCES, 1937

EVENINGS at 8.0 p.m.

22nd, 23rd and 24th

The Tiger *Ronald Berkley*

25th, 26th and May 1st

Call it a Day *Doris Smith*

Reserved Seats: numbered, 2/6. Unnumbered 1/6.
Admission 7d.

Transferable Ticket for the same seat for the ten plays.
2/6 seat 15/-, 1/6 seat 12/6 7d. seat 5/-

Special Play Production Course, including classes in Acting,
Elocution, Stage Dancing, Stage Department, Make-up, etc.

Vacancies for men and women of experience
and ability for Amateur Repertory Company.

Send stamp for prospectus to:

The Business Manager, St. Pancras People's Theatre,
Ltd., at the above address. Interviews by appointment.

VOICE PRODUCTION :: DRAMATIC TECHNIQUE

VERSE SPEAKING :: ADJUDICATIONS

PLAYS PRODUCED :: RECITALS

LAURA SMITHSON

L.R.A.M. Elocution Double Diploma, M.R.S.T.
Of Principal West-end Theatres and "Old Vic,"
Shakespeare Co.

IVY SMITHSON

(Local Representative, The Guildhall School of Music
and Drama and the Poetry Society (Incorp.)

Communications to:—

102 Abbey Road Mansions, N.W.8, and
1 Ropner Terrace, Stockton-on-Tees, Co. Durham.

**LITTLE THEATRE, CITIZEN HOUSE, BATH,
AND**

EVERYMAN THEATRE, HAMPSTEAD, N.W.3

Summer Schools of Art of Acting and Dramatic Pro-
duction held in three sessions, each complete in itself, through-
out August and September, in Bath and London Theatres.
All types of Plays produced. Acting parts guaranteed. Public
performances. Course Fee, Three Guinea.

Performances of Special Coronation Pageant and
Modern and Classic Plays, suitable for Community Groups
and Dramatic Societies, given at Everyman Theatre, Hamp-
stead, on Sunday afternoons, April 4th and 25th, May 2nd,
9th, 23rd and 30th, at 2.30 p.m. Admission Free, by invitation
ticket.

Beautiful Stage Costumes, all periods, also, Curtains,
Scenery, Properties, available on loan at inexpensive rates.
Dramatic Library. Free Advisory Bureau.

Pageants written and produced for Coronation Festivities.
For particulars apply Hon. Sec., Little Theatre, Citizens
House, Bath, enclosing stamped envelope.

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

ELEVENTH EASTER DRAMA SCHOOL

April 16th to 23rd

preceded by

A THREE DAY COURSE ON DRAMA IN THE SCHOOL

for Teachers and Producers of School Plays

April 13th to 16th

at King's College of Household and Social Science,

Campden Hill Road, W.8.

DAY AND EVENING SESSIONS

RESIDENCE AT THE COLLEGE

STAFF:

SCHOOL COURSE

MR. RODNEY BENNETT
MR. HOWARD HAYDEN

GENERAL COURSE

MR. MICHAEL MACOWAN
MR. NORMAN MARSHALL

MISS HELGA BURGESS

Prospectus from the Schools Organizer, British Drama League,

9 FITZROY SQUARE, LONDON, W.1

Please mention "Drama" when replying to Advertisements.

Chas. H. FOX Limited

184 HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON, W.C.1.

Telegrams: Theatricals, Westcent, London.

Established over 60 years

Telephone: Holborn 9567-9.

Theatrical Costumiers & Wig Makers.

COSTUMES & WIGS ON HIRE FOR ALL OPERAS & DRAMATIC PLAYS

QUALITY, CORRECTNESS, CLEANLINESS, SERVICE.

WRITE FOR ESTIMATES

SPECIAL TERMS TO BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE.

**HESSIAN—FIRE-PROOFED—PREPARED ESPECIALLY FOR
STAGE CURTAINS** IN ROLLS OF 50 YDS. APPROX. 72" WIDE

Neutral Grey, £4-5-0, Dead Black, £4-2-6, Natural, £2-7-6, per Roll

CASH WITH ORDER.

CARRIAGE PAID IN GREAT BRITAIN.

SAMPLES ON APPLICATION.

REYNOLDS & PARNELL, 183, Desborough Rd., HIGH WYCOMBE, Bucks.

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE BOOKSHOP

FOR QUICK SERVICE

'Phone: EUSTON 2666

PLAYS AND BOOKS SUPPLIED

AT THE SHORTEST NOTICE

9, FITZROY SQUARE, LONDON, W.1.

EMBASSY SCHOOL OF ACTING

EMBASSY THEATRE, Swiss Cottage, N.W.3

A limited number of young men
and women selected for full time
**TRAINING in ACTING and
STAGE MANAGEMENT.**

AUDITIONS for the Summer

Term are now being held.

Ring up or write to the School Secretary for an
appointment and particulars. PRIMROSE 6666

FILM ART

The Quarterly that sets a new
Standard in Criticism

I shall certainly see to it that all
my friends become acquainted with
your marvellous magazine and shall
do everything in my power to see
that your circulation is increased,
for such a deserving magazine should
and must eventually take its place
in the top rank of magazines.

**EDWARD A. BLATT,
PARAMOUNT PICTURES INC.
NEW YORK.**

A Publication of the Anglo-American Publishing and Distributing
Co. of London and New York.

THE STUDIOS, 8 STEYNING WAY, LONDON, N.17

One Shilling

YS

R
E

V.
S.

D